



# INSTRUCT-O-GRAM

## THE HANDS-ON TRAINING GUIDE FOR THE FIRE INSTRUCTOR

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### *Engine Company Tips*

#### **Task**

The instructor will deliver the basic concepts of some practical engine company operational recommendations developed by Dr. Harry R. Carter, MIFireE. The focus of this drill is to allow the student to develop an improved understanding of some practical firefighting tips and how they are to be implemented on the fireground.

#### **Introduction**

The students should have a basic understanding of their role in the fire department and the role they are to play during firefighting operations. In order to better participate in the fireground operation, the students should have an understanding of what strategy is and how they fit into the scheme. They will receive information that will allow them to develop an understanding of the important role that fire department engine companies play during firefighting operations.

#### **Course Outline**

1. Cover the twelve main points as described by Harry Carter.
2. Conduct a discussion of their applicability to your local fire department operations.

**Instructor's Note:** It is important to be able to use local examples of firefighting operations for this session. You must bring the textbook to life with examples to which your students can relate.

It has been our experience that people are no longer experiencing actual firefighting operations on a frequent basis. Further, it has been our experience that the simple, common sense elements of firefighting are not being passed from generation to generation. In line with that, we offer these tips as a way of sharing the wisdom of the past with the current generation.

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## Performance Objectives

Our review of the **National Fire Protection Association Standard 1021, Standard for Professional Fire Officers Qualifications** makes absolutely no reference to the actual conduct of firefighting operations. It makes great mention of how to manage a fire, how to establish command, how to transfer command, etc. However, it makes no reference to a need for developing those necessary skills to conduct a firefighting operation.

## Presentation Outline

***Tip Number One - Most fires that you will ever attend can be controlled by a single, well-placed hoseline.***

Based upon a review of many years worth of firefighting operations by the late ISFSI President William Clark, it was discovered that the bulk of the fires that a fire department will encounter can usually be handled by a single hoseline. If this is the case, why then do we see so many hoselines deployed at the fires we attend?

- ◆ We like to be safe, rather than sorry.
- ◆ Many hoselines are not properly positioned.
- ◆ Many times a hoseline of insufficient size is selected.
- ◆ Many times people do not attack the fire in a proper manner.
- ◆ The use of a backup hoseline is strongly recommended.

We offer all of this to urge you to select the proper size hoseline and place it according to the situation as you can identify it.

***Tip Number Two – Do not shoot water at smoke.***

Many times fire personnel who do not know what they are doing can be seen busily pouring

water through the smoke-filled windows of a seemingly burning building. Perhaps they are responding to that age-old theory, "... where there is smoke, there must be fire." Unfortunately, they may actually be making things worse.

Smoke and heated gases that are leaving a building will stop doing that if you make them wet and cold. When you do this, you will automatically cause the smoke to drop, thereby making your job tougher.

Shooting water at smoke is a very bad thing. In fact it can kill people that might otherwise have been rescued.

***Tip Number Three – An effective hose stream will usually extinguish all the fire it can in less than a minute.***

The objective in stating this tip is to remind you that the person operating a fire attack hose line has to pay attention to the impact of their fire stream on the fire. This tip refers to the impact of an interior fire attack line. Think about this fact. It makes no sense to sit in one spot pouring water on a fire, which may already be extinguished, while more fire remains untouched just up ahead.

The purpose of this tip is to remind the person on the nozzle to keep moving in on the fire. The Incident Commander needs to receive periodic updates on hoseline advancement.

***Tip Number Four – Keep your hoselines moving until the fire is out.***

This is the logical follow up to the previous tip. An aggressive interior attack is just what its name implies. You must keep moving the line in until all of the fire is extinguished. Structures have been destroyed and lives have been lost while



recalcitrant hose teams have sat back on their haunches in the hallway to a blazing apartment.

***Tip Number Five – An effective Interior Sector Commander will ensure that hoselines are being moved in on the seat of the fire.***

This statement fixes the responsibility of that officer charged with supervising an interior attack on a structure fire. Someone must ensure that the lines are boring in on the heart of the fire.

***Tip Number Six – The Incident Commander and subordinate Sector Commanders must work to prevent hoselines from working against each other.***

Many decades ago, a movie was produced that was entitled, **Coordinated Fire Attack**. In that film, the concept of applying teamwork to the fireground was discussed. Extinguishing a fire takes the combined efforts of a number of people. These people must work together. Opposing hose streams can injure firefighters and drive their efforts out of the involved structure. Engine company firefighting is a matter of teamwork.

***Tip Number Seven – Never stretch light and hope for help from the next-due unit.***

There are those firefighting units that simply do not like to bother stretching any sort of hose at the scene of a fire. Engine companies are expected to pull their share of the weight by responding, securing a water source, and stretching supply and attack hose lines. They are then expected to engage in whatever firefighting tasks are assigned by the Incident Commander.

Engine company teams should never lay back and expect someone else to do their work. The delay that this causes may lead to the death or

injury of a firefighter or a citizen. The same argument can be made for a firefighting unit that never deploys a sufficiently large enough hoseline for whatever task is at hand.

***Tip Number Eight – Whenever possible you should back up your initial attack line with a line of at least the same size.***

This is one of the best precautions that an Incident Commander can call for. While the first line to attack the fire may be of a sufficient size to extinguish the fire, there is always the possibility that it might not. By stretching a backup line with enough power to backup the first line, you are able to hedge your bet, just in case the first line turns out to be too small. Numerous cases exist on record to verify the wisdom of this firefighting tip.

***Tip Number Nine – Always call help early.***

If the fire in front of your eyes seems like more than the response you are expecting can handle, you need help. It is critical to remember that time is one element you can never replace. The best way to ensure that help arrives in time is to ensure that it is dispatched at the same time as your department. This can be accomplished via the mechanism of automatic aid agreements.

People, who wait until they arrive on location to call help, usually end up nursing the structure that it is burning into a sloppy looking pile of rubble.

***Tip Number Ten – If your tactics are not working, try something else.***

You must constantly monitor the progress of your engine company hoseline attack crews. If you do not seem to be making progress with the tactics you are using, you should try a different type of



attack. Your experience, training and education should help you to determine whether the operations on-scene are unfolding in front of you as you hope they will.

Do not be afraid to change the way in which you are pressing home the attack. The inside/outside dichotomy may have to change in a flash. By constantly monitoring the operation, you will be better able to make adjustments when needed

***Tip Number Eleven – Use your personnel wisely.***

We normally do not have enough people on the scene to handle all of the tasks that need to be accomplished. Do not allow too many people to operate a single hoseline. There have been a number of photos showing us where five or six people have been seen operating a small caliber hoseline.

***Tip Number Twelve – Do not let smoke scare you out of making an interior attack.***

Many times fires have been allowed to grow because the Incident Commander was scared into conducting an exterior operation because of the

heavy volume of smoke showing upon arrival. If there is a fire, you must expect a certain amount of smoke. Your truck company activities will include a requisite amount of ventilation in your firefighting operation. Let these operations take effect, while you are in the process of advancing your attack hoselines.

## Acknowledgment

This Instruct-O-Gram was created by Dr. Harry R. Carter, MIFireE, a municipal fire protection consultant from Adelphia, New Jersey. Dr. Carter is the President of ISFSI.

## Instructor and Student References

Firefighting Strategy and Tactics – An Eight-Step Method, Harry R. Carter, Ph.D., Fire Protection Publications, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, 1998

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